

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

February 11, 2016
Outdoor Adventure Center
1801 Atwater Street, Detroit, MI 48207

Present for the Natural Resources Commission

John Matonich, chair
Vicki Pontz
Christine Crumbaugh
Louise Klarr
Tim Nichols

Present for DNR Staff

Bill Moritz, DNR director
Bob Reichel, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chairman John Matonich called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) Overview **Linda Walter**, director of the OAC, gave an overview of the history of the OAC. The building has been reincarnated and they are proud to be a part of the area's regrowth. They have welcomed 50,000 visitors since opening on July 20, 2015. The OAC keeps changing and growing. They inspire, educate, and connect. **Walter** added that the OAC has hosted many meetings; over 145 events in just 5 months. Starting in March they will be having a presentation featuring a different state park each month. They have brought Up North downtown. **Walter** encouraged all to come back to tour the center.

Parks and Trails Update **Ron Olson**, chief of the Parks and Recreation division, adds that **Walter** and her staff pumped the life into the building and do a wonderful job. He introduced the staff of Belle Isle, including **Scott Pratt, Mike Terrell, Karis Floyd, Jacob Brown, Theresa Bryan, and Darlisa Rickman**. **Olson** noted that there were 3.8 million visitors last year on Belle Isle. With recent survey responses, Belle Isle has received an 89% satisfaction rating. Top two things that came out of the survey are that people value a clean and safe state park.

Olson reported that camping reservations that are made six months in advance are up 12% from last year, harbor slips are up 14% and the recreation passport trend is up. The department will be acquiring three new parcels of land across the street from the OAC. **Olson** also provided an update on what happened at the morning's session of the Michigan State Park Advisory Committee meeting, including discussing a future ORV area in Oakland County. He also added that there would be a public meeting at Silver Lake that evening to talk about options to expand parking, and making it more efficient to get there.

Marketing and Outreach Division Overview **Kristin Phillips**, chief of the Marketing and Outreach division gave an overview on how the department provides marketing and communications services, what is provided in each section, and how that collective efforts draw from employees in many divisions and program areas. She also stressed the importance of thinking of the department as a business with customers that we all serve.

Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Presentation **Erik Eklund** of the Finance and Operations division provided an overview of the proposed 2017 budget for the department and current-year supplementals. **Governor Snyder** presented the state's budget Wednesday. The budget proposed for the DNR comes in at \$397.5 million, almost exactly the same dollar-wise as last year, with some shifts program to program. The budget includes several new areas of investment: increasing transparency and accountability for public lands; keeping invasive species out of Michigan; saving lives, property and timber assets; protecting Great Lakes fisheries; growing local economies through strategic investment in forestry; providing mobile IT solutions for customers; improving state park experiences, and enhancing world-class fisheries.

Aquaculture in Great Lakes **Tammy Newcomb**, senior water policy advisory, then walked the commissioners through the process of how the Quality of Life (QOL) departments (DNR/DEQ/MDARD) evaluated proposals for commercial net-pen aquaculture operations (fish farming) in the Great Lakes. The proposals were looked at with an eye toward the environmental, economic, regulatory and social aspects of such operations. At this time, the QOL agencies are reviewing and finalizing a synthesis document on commercial net-pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes. Currently, MDARD cannot issue aquaculture registrations in the public waters of the Great Lakes. All reports and related information are available for review at www.michigan.gov/aquaculture.

Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference Review, **Russ Mason**, chief of the Wildlife division provided that the Midwest was held a few weeks back in Grand Rapids. He noted that it was a great opportunity to bring students and professionals together.

Pure Michigan Hunt Winners **Chief Mason** shared some information on the applications and drawing. **Director Moritz** announced the three winners; **Jeff Kresnak** of Caledonia, **Makayla Fleetwood** of Bloomingdale, and **Mike Scherzer** of Freeland. **Mason** thanked all those who donated gifts towards the prize package.

Legislative Report **Trevor VanDyke**, Legislative and Legal Affairs Office director, provided a written report of legislation related to the department. In addition to the written report, **Dennis Knapp** provided updates on recent legislative highlights.

Committee Reports

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries **Commissioner Klarr** provided an overview on the committee meeting which included an update from Fisheries chief **Jim Dexter**, who gave a recap of the 2016 Black Lake sturgeon season. Seven fish were harvested during the one hour season on February 6. Wildlife chief **Russ Mason** shared information on a proposed land use amendment which would prohibit the launch of motorized watercraft from state-owned lands

onto Ely, Little Tom and Crooked lakes in Allegan county. He also provided an update on the division's aerial elk survey; a total of 1002 elk were counted, providing a population estimate of 1,371 elk. He talked about a brief update on a cougar recently found dead in the Upper Peninsula, and he took a moment to remember Wildlife technician **Bill Rollo**, who recently passed away unexpectedly.

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee chair **Louise Klarr** noted that the committee met earlier in the day, with much to discuss including; general management plan for Ludington State Park, applications for 2016 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and Land and Water Conservation Fund grant projects, and the proposed master plan for the Muskegon Sports Complex, which received full support of the committee. The committee also received an overview of the recent Belle Isle State Park visitor survey. The committee wrapped up with a presentation on a joint Oakland County Parks/DNR ORV state/county park. The department is in the process of acquiring 400+ acres for the park near the Holly Recreation Area and Groveland Oaks County Park for a jointly managed state/county ORV park which may open in 2017.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Dennis Knapp** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 4:11 p.m.)

Susan Lackey, executive director of the Legacy Land Conservancy thanked the commission and the department for the action this fall at Watkins Lake State Park. It's an action in keeping with Michigan's conservation efforts. She noted that the business community in the area has been very supportive, noticing that it's a unique opportunity to create a world class recreation area. User groups are also excited about this property. **Lackey** also thanked the parks staff for coming up with creative solutions.

Will Thompson came before the commission to discuss suppressors and talked about his hearing loss and damage due to hunting and target shooting without suppressors. He is a competitive shooter that now uses suppressors and looks forward to the order passing. He addressed the subsonic provision and the 30 decibel provision. **Thompson** thinks this will limit small game hunters and youth and urged the commission to pass the order without restrictions.

Dennis Cronk came to discuss nighttime predator hunting. He added that he has limited success with rimfire rifles. He believes that hunting at night is safe, noting that much time is spent on checking out the area being hunted, looking at conditions. He has had to restrict hunting to 50-100 yards and coyotes don't seem to come close enough. In shooting with rimfire, they seem to have runoffs. **Cronk** said that the problem with rimfire is that it doesn't have much power after 75 yards. With the growing coyote population they need better control measures and he believes that the centerfire rifle would make this possible.

Merle R. Jones II also came to speak about the use of centerfire rifle at night for predator hunting. He believes that using a centerfire rifle would be a more effective tool to humanely dispatch coyotes.

Dale Hendershot, Michigan Trapper and Predator Callers Association, first spoke to the commission regarding suppressors. He noted that he does not support the restrictions, adding that he does not think the sound level would be enforceable. He asked the commission to pass the order with no restrictions on the decibel or subsonic limits. The next item he addressed was centerfire rifle at night. He asked the commission to consider centerfire at night, adding that his group is discussing, but with some restrictions.

Bob Abbott came to discuss centerfire rifle use at night. He hunts private land for coyotes only. Four months ago he contacted Law Enforcement division's chief **Hagler** and assistant chief Molnar on this topic, and they informed him that hunting with a centerfire rifle was too dangerous. He called Indiana for stats for nighttime centerfire use on private lands; they told him that they have had zero incidents since 2000. **Abbott** shared that a petition is being passed around that does have restrictions. He will come before the commission again in March and will be forwarding information to the commission.

Robert Schultz also came before the commission to discuss centerfire rifle use at night, noting that he has been coyote hunting for four years and believes that this would help manage the coyote population. **Schultz** talked about getting a humane dispatch and that rimfire doesn't allow for that.

Knox Williams from the American Suppressor Association stated that the Association would support the use of suppressors with the removal of the two restrictions. He added that they would still like to host a demonstration. He closed by saying that 37 states allow hunting with suppressors and they would like Michigan to be the 38th.

Merle Shepard from the Safari Club came to discuss bear baiting with chocolate and passed out a copy of the MUCC letter to the commission. Safari club believes that baiting with chocolate should be banned completely. **Shepard** adds that they think it is the responsibility of the commission to stop use of all chocolate and said that it affects smaller animals as well. They will also be going to other states to stop this as well. He suggests using the science. As a closing note, Safari Club would be in favor of the use of suppressors for hunting with no restrictions.

Drew Youngedyke from MUCC updated the commission on the status of their regional meetings; topics proposed so far include chocolate and bear bait, bounty for coyotes, ORV usage as related to GEM trails, and centerfire rifle use at night. The MUCC shared condolences for **Bill Rollo** and said that he had a deep care for conservation in Michigan.

Sam Morell from Michigan Bow Hunters Association talked about the definitions of archery equipment and how it is used in the state. Michigan Bow Hunters support traditional archery, but do not support the use of pneumatic archery devices. He talked about his PowerPoint presentation which has been forwarded to the commissioners. He also added that they support traditional archery, although they are not really in favor of crossbows.

Dean Hall also from the Michigan Bow Hunters Association complimented the department on the Outdoor Adventure Center, saying that it's a great piece of revitalization and a grand accomplishment. He shared that the Michigan Bow Hunters Association would be happy to help with the OAC indoor archery range.

Chairman Matonich adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 5:01 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 5:02 p.m. He noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes, January 14, 2016 Natural Resources Commission Meeting

Commissioner Nichols made a motion that the minutes of the January 14, 2016 NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Klarr** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Use of Suppressors in the Taking of Game, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2016

Commissioner Klarr moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2016, Use of Suppressors in the Taking of Game be adopted. **Commissioner Nichols** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, at which point commissioner **Pontz** provided an explanation for her no vote to this amendment. She would like to see more meaningful data from other states provided before she makes her decision. She is also concerned about the message we heard last month about recruiting and retention of hunters and fails to see how approving the use of suppressors would improve the image of hunters with the non-hunting public. She thinks the order as written is confusing and would be difficult to enforce.

Commissioner Klarr next made a motion to amend Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 1 of 2016 regarding the use of suppressors in the taking of game. She stated that this amendment will remove the two restrictions which limit the amount of sound reduction produced by the silencer and prohibit the use of a combination of a silencer with subsonic ammunition for

hunting. **Klarr** made a motion to approve the amendment only. **Commissioner Nichols** supported that motion. **Matonich** called for discussion on the amendment only, there being none, a vote was taken with **commissioners Klarr, Crumbaugh and Nichols** voting yes, **commissioner Pontz** voted no. The motion passed. Next **Matonich** called for discussion to the amended motion, there being none, a vote was taken on the amended motion only, **commissioners Klarr, Crumbaugh and Nichols** voted to pass, **commissioner Pontz** voted no. The motion as amended carried.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – DIRECTOR

Director Moritz listed the “for information only” items on the agenda.

DIRECTOR’S ACTION ITEMS

Director Moritz listed the “director’s action” items on the agenda and indicated he would approve all items.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Pontz once again heard the Conservation Coalition collaboration on the R3. She attended a TB information meeting on January 28 adding that there is a new herd with TB positive results. On February 4, she went to a TB advisory committee meeting. She thanked the department for sharing expertise in emergency management with the Department of Environmental Quality, adding that it is very important and much appreciated.

Commissioner Crumbaugh noted that the previous evening she attended Michigan Farm Bureau’s legislative reception, noting that there was good conversation on natural resources.

Commissioner Nichols attended the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance Banquet in Lansing with 150 people and said that it was a good event, adding that the Director also attended. Mentoring activities for the future were discussed. He also attended the Farm Bureau meeting. As they move forward better attendance with Coffee with the Commissioners, he appreciated those who attended. **Nichols** also thanked those who address their concerns at public appearances.

Director Moritz attended the Sportsman’s Caucus Breakfast earlier in the day which had good conversation on wetland type projects.

Chairman Matonich attended the wild turkey strategic workshop. He also thanked **commissioner Pontz** for expressing her concern over the use of suppressors.

Next Meeting

Chairman Matonich announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, March 10, 2016 at the DoubleTree Hotel, 650 East 24th Street, Holland, MI. Committees meeting in March will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

Adjournment

Commissioner Nichols made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Klarr** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 3/10/16



John Matonich, NRC Chairman



Dr. William E. Moritz, DNR Director